

Good Friday

YOU BROKE IT, JESUS BUYS IT

John 19:16b-30

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Analysis by Dana Bjorlin

16b So they took Jesus; 17 and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. 18 There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. 19 Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' 20 Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. 21 Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, 'Do not write, "The King of the Jews", but, "This man said, I am King of the Jews."' 22 Pilate answered, 'What I have written I have written.' 23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. 24 So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.' This was to fulfill what the scripture says,

'They divided my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.'

25 And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here

is your son.' 27 Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

28 After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' 29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

31 Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. 32 Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. 35 (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) 36 These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, 'None of his bones shall be broken.' 37 And again another passage of scripture says, 'They will look on the one whom they have pierced.'

38 After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. 39 Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. 40 They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. 41 Now

there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. 42 And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

The same pericopes come up every year on Good Friday and Crossings' textual studies have shown several ways to approach proclamation related to St. John's two-chapter account of Christ's Passion. Each of these distinct approaches is appropriate depending circumstance or proclaimer.

If the full text of John's Passion Narrative is read or in some way dramatically performed, time considerations become more significant. In such a case, Michael Hoy's diagnosis from last year-which might be used like generalized comment-is especially suitable.

Over the past four years several other approaches have been used. In 2009, Paul Jaster focused only on chapter 18; in 2008 Timothy J. Hoyer used excerpts from chapters 18 & 19; and in 2007, Hoyer diagnosed/ prognosticated "a very few selected verses" (that time from only ch. 19).

The following analysis will attempt yet another approach by relating to the "crucifixion proper," knowing that the rest of John's Passion and Gospel-indeed the whole of the gospel message-also inform the verses and message of this text.

DIAGNOSIS: Personally Responsible

Step One: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Mine and Yours*
"You break it; you buy it." We see such a sign in places where fragile (and usually expensive) things are on sale. It's a sign demanding individual accountability. "You made your bed and you

can sleep in it," is a saying with the same sort of message. We like to talk about accountability in this way. I don't have to suffer for your mistakes, for your transgressions. When it comes to responsibility, as it does for property, we like things to be: what's yours is yours and what's mine is mine. Never the twain shall meet. Similarly, we may prefer the gospel of John's take on Jesus' trek to Golgotha: he carries the cross by himself (v. 17). It's a way for me to avoid his cross (and whatever it stands for) and to search for my own path to work out my own problems.

Step Two: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : Seeking Control

Of course so much of what is involved in Christ's passion, death, and resurrection is his claim to rule over us and the cosmos as king—a king different from the worldly kind, but a king nonetheless (18:36). Our reaction is to recoil from such a one as this. Like Eve and Adam of long ago, we aren't satisfied to have the world divided into yours and mine, and never the twain shall meet. What we want and seek is complete control over whatever we claim as our own: our selves, our time, our possessions, etc. (Lutheran Book of Worship, p. 67). "We have no [other] king[s]" (19:15) than the ones we choose for ourselves. So we resolve to avoid the cross, to seek our own solutions, and to choose our own rulers—but whether or not we are successful at this is best left for consideration at another time.

Step Three: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : Not Listening

"Besides," muttered the opponents of Jesus in complaint to Pilate. "This man [only] said, I am King of the Jews" (v. 21). But just as at his hearing before the priestly fraternity, they had neglected to listen to "this man." This man had said to the Jews who believed in him, "if you continue in my word... you will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (8:31). But these folks don't want to know who "this man" is. Nor do they

want to listen to him. They have settled on their own anti-creed (thanks to Marcus Felde for this concept in diagnosis for Lent 4, series A), which is actually opposed to anything Jesus said and did.

But this means that they are for all intents and purposes opposed to God! Jesus had also said, "The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, for I have not spoken on my own, but my Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak" (12:48-49). All those who refuse to hear what "this one" said, who avoid his cross, demand their own solutions, and seek their kind of rulers are eternally judged!

PROGNOSIS: LOVINGLY RELATIONAL

Step Four: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Loving Sheep, Pharisees, Samaritans, The Blind, Friends, Disciples*

Yet in a mind-blowing turn of events, we-who have been reading from John's Gospel this Lenten season (Sundays, series A)-recall that "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (3:17, Lent 2). Rather, Jesus "lay[s] down [his] life for the sheep," for those whom he knows and those who know him (10:14-25). In being lifted up on the cross, Jesus draws all people to himself and drives out the ruler of this world along with all of that ruler's dark and destructive habits (12:31-32). Rather Jesus gives living water (Lent 3), he makes the blind to see (Lent 4), he raises the dead to life (Lent 5), and he loves his own to the very end (13:1; Maundy Thursday). In dying, Jesus gives his very life for a world that's divided, that's manipulative, that's hostile, and that, sadly, we have been part of.

Step Five: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *A New Way*

In the Gospel for Maundy Thursday, Jesus tells his disciples and us that he has given us an example of how to live-even in a world that still bears the marks of its alliance with its old ruler. We are to follow the example of him, our master. No longer do we need to be completely in control of our selves, of our time, of ours or anyone else's money. We can enjoy them as gracious gifts from our gracious God. Jesus leads us in new way of living, of loving, of serving: "love one another as I have loved you" (15:12).

Step Six: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Sharing "Mine" with You*

Therefore, we no longer need to try to isolate ourselves in self-driven accountability. As Christ has shared his life with us, we now can afford to share our lives with others. In a world obsessed with "you break it, you buy it," Jesus turns around our need to watch out only for ourselves. Now we can be there to help out where others have broken "things": lives, relationships, or opportunities. We can be there protecting their fragile valuables as well. We can live life a new way: abundantly!